

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CA-01
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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4586
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 1041

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF SS MO SHUM
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON GOM VIEWS ON SAHARAN REFUGEES

REF A. ALGIERS 0363, B. STATE 27988, C. 77 RABAT 2399 (NOTAL)

1. GOM THINKING ON THE SAHARAN REFUGEE PROBLEM REMAINS ESSENTIALLY
AS REPORTED REFTEL C, NAMELY:

A. THE REFUGEES ARE BEING HELD IN ALGIERAN CAMPS AGAINST THEIR
WILLS AND SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO RETURN FREELY TO THEIR HOMELAND;
B. THE CAMPS ARE SUPPLYING CONSCRIPTS FOR THE POLISARIO; AND
C. THE ALGERIANS ARE PLAYING A NUMBERS GAME WITH THE
REFUGEES, ALSO HAVING SWOLLEN THE CAMPS WITH PEOPLE FROM
ELSEWHERE THAN THE FORMER SPANISH SAHARA.

2. GOM CONTINUES TO AVAIL ITSELF OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS
ITS CONCERN OVER THE PLIGHT OF THE SAHARAN REFUGEES. A RECENT
OPEN LETTER FROM MOROCCAN MP'S REPRESENTING THE THREE SAHARAN
PROVINCES CONDEMNED CONDITIONS IN THE TINDOUF CAMPS AND
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CALLED FOR THE GENEVA-BASED INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON HUMAN
RIGHTS TO INVESTIGATE "THIS TRAGEDY". ON FEBRUARY 2, THE
MOROCCAN MISSION TO GENEVA ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE DECLARING THAT
WHILE ALGIERS REFUSED TO ALLOW THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF
THE RED CROSS TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO INSPECT THE SAHARAN
REFUGEE CAMPS, MOROCCO REGULARLY GRANTED ICRC MEMBERS ACCESS TO
THE 99 ALGERIAN PRISONERS-OF-WAR BEING HELD IN MOROCCO.

SIMILARLY, A PRESS STATEMENT RELEASED BY THE OFFICIAL MOROCCAN NEWS AGENCY, MAP, ON FEBRUARY 14 REFUTED THE ALLEGATION MADE BY A POLISARIO REPRESENTATIVE AT A BERN PRESS CONFERENCE THAT THE GOM HAD TURNED EL AYOUN AND SMARA INTO CONCENTRATION CAMPS. THE CITIES OF "EL AYOUN AND SMAR, LIKE OTHER PARTS OF THE SAHARAN PROVINCES, ARE OPEN FOR ALL VISITS AND ACCESSIBLE TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS". AS FOR CONCENTRATION CAMPS, "THEY EXIST IN TINDOUF RATHER THAN EL AYOUN OF SMARA."

3. COMMENT: APART FOR HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS, SELF-INTEREST IS UNDOUBTEDLY A FACTOR IN GOM CONCERN OVER THE FATE OF THE SAHARAN REFUGEES. AS LONG AS THE GOM VIEWS THE TINDOUF CAMPS AS A BREEDING GROUND FOR THE POLISARIO, AS WELL AS A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS EMBARRASSMENT FOR ALGIERS, IT WILL CONTINUE TO CALL ATTENTION TO CONDITIONS IN THE CAMPS, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE NEEDS FOR INTERNATIONAL SCRUTINY.
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